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Wall Street, a missing girl, and outsourced furniture

Tom Coker '87

Barrie Benson '92

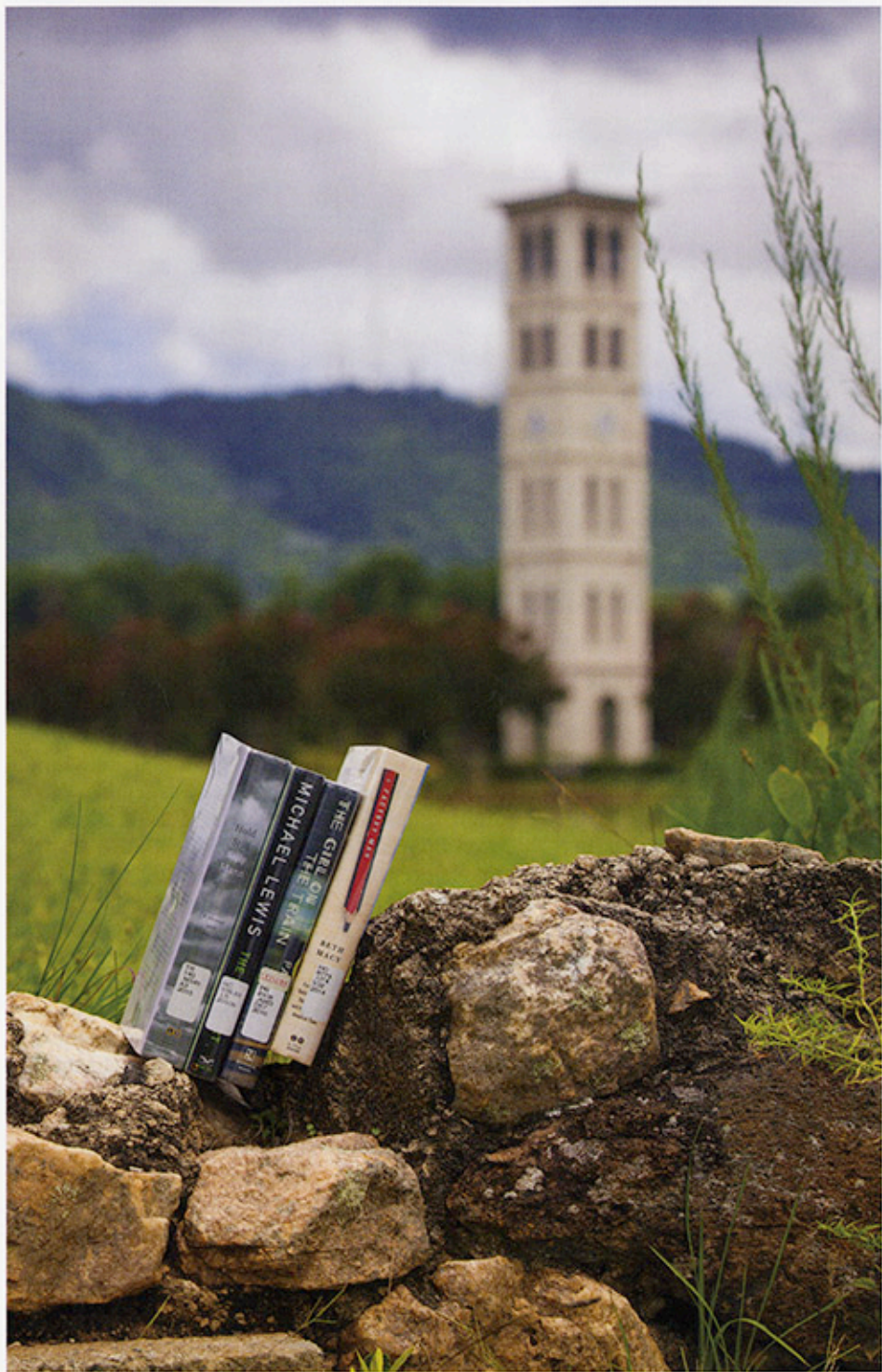
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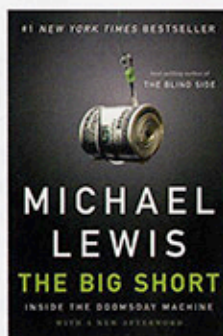
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tom Coker '87 is owner of Reid's Fine Foods, a specialty food store and wine bar with two locations in Charlotte, NC. Barrie Benson '92 is the owner of Charlotte-based Barrie Benson Interior Design. Her work has been published in *Garden & Gun*, *House Beautiful*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Coastal Living*. She also holds a degree from the University of Georgia. Benson and Coker recently completed their second business collaboration with the opening of Reid's Fine Foods SouthPark in south Charlotte.

WALL STREET, A MISSING GIRL, AND OUTSOURCED FURNITURE

We asked **Tom Coker '87** and **Barrie Benson '92** what works are currently inspiring them.

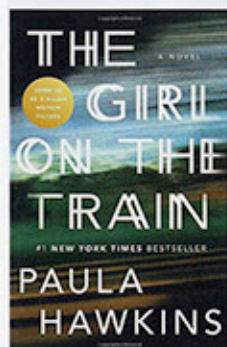
Tom's works:



THE BIG SHORT by Michael Lewis

Charlotte was hit hard—really hard—with the financial crisis in 2008. It took years for us to recover, mostly because our biggest industry is banking. In some ways, that made it even harder to read Michael Lewis's book about the reality that led us to that nightmare. Lewis provides not only a riveting read, but also an interesting one in that he introduces a cast of characters we had never heard of but who played a major part in the crisis. This one opened my eyes from the standpoint of a homeowner, but even more so as a business owner. It's more important than ever to protect your assets and make smart, careful decisions. If

you're craving more Wall Street literature, go back further in Lewis's collection to read *Liar's Poker*, which argues that the meltdown of 2008 was rooted in Wall Street practices that started back in the 1980s.



THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN
by Paula Hawkins

Cover to cover, this is one of the most captivating books I've read in a really long time. Think *Gone Girl*, but with more narrators, more players, more points of view, more threats, more back-stabbing, and more lies. For instance, *The Girl on the Train* is Megan, who is also known as Jess. She disappears. It becomes a tabloid story. Rachel, another narrator, tries to help police, but she's a drunk and her memories are hazy, at best. No one, including you, will know who to trust or believe, and the suspense builds the further you get into it.

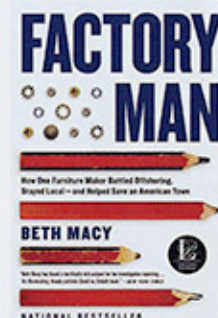


SCANDAL
created by Shonda Rhimes

After five seasons and hundreds of episodes, I'm still

hooked. The quick-witted dialogue, the political conundrums and crises, and the never-ending Fitz-Liv saga keep my wife and me glued to the television, sometimes for hours at a time. Everyone knows it's a show that is difficult to walk away from. But it's also smart, and the way characters' personal and professional lives weave together leaves us wide-eyed and shaking our heads at the same time.

Barrie's works:



FACTORY MAN
by Beth Macy

Recently, I have been designing a furniture line with Century Furniture located in Hickory, NC, and have become more knowledgeable of the production end of the interior design business.

Macy's book explains the movement of manufacturing offshore and the effect on the American middle class through the history of Vaughan Bassett, a furniture company that had its start in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia at the turn of the 20th Century. Vaughan Bassett, similar to Century, is a privately owned family business that managed to survive the late '80s and '90s when much of the production of furniture was farmed out to China and Taiwan.

In the book, the key figure of Mr. John Bassett III, the grandson and the namesake of the original Bassett Furniture owner, has found a way to instigate a lawsuit against the Chinese

manufacturers in violation of the World Trade Organization regulations. He also works to expose the unethical methods the Chinese use to provide manufacturing at a quarter of the price.

Today, the southern furniture market is beginning to receive requests from customers to buy American-made furniture. This is due to people like Mr. Bassett and the relentless effort and methods he used to bring to light the many violations in Chinese manufacturing.

For anyone who wants to understand why and how we lost our jobs to overseas markets, this is the perfect page-turner of a story to add to your list.



THE FIRST MONDAY IN MAY
directed by Andrew Rossi

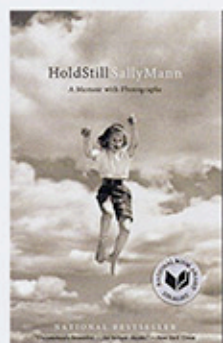
On a recent long plane ride from Los Angeles, I watched this documentary, which allows us to experience the preparation for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibit "China: Through the Looking Glass," by curator Andrew Bolton. The film culminates with the annual Met Gala and opening of the costume show held on the first Monday of May 2016.

My mind was blown with the creative vision, the politics, and the work that goes into the curated show and the gala.

It is also fascinating to watch the painstaking progress of the costume curator's vision come to life while simultane-

ously balancing the wishes of Anna Wintour, editor in chief of *Vogue* magazine, the head curator of the Asian wing of the Met, the politics and people of China, and the celebrities and their entourages who attend the gala.

As an interior designer, much of my job is based on executing our creative vision on a deadline and a budget, while weighing the wishes of clients and my creative drive. The personal parallels between my career and the curator's made this a fun and fascinating watch.



HOLD STILL
A Memoir with Photographs
by Sally Mann

As I am a fan of Sally Mann and her photographs, when my mother told me it was one of her favorite books of the year, I knew I would enjoy it. Mann has quite a cult following, and her photographs are prohibitively expensive.

If you are not familiar with her work, you may recall seeing a few of her most provocative and controversial photographs of her prepubescent children, half dressed. Her critics accused her of exposing her children for the sake of her art. But Mann gives a very personal account of why she photographs and documents her family life and why it is important to her. She also writes of her friendship with Cy Twombly, a great friend who lived and worked in Lexington, VA. ●